

Wishing Her the Best by jules (theskyisaneighborhood)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Childhood Friends, F/M, Friends to Lovers, Hopper has been crushing for a long time, Jim is eighteen, Joyce makes the right choice in the end, and stupid in love, idiots getting married, teenagers in love, wedding interruptus, while Lonnie is just stupid

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Summary:

"I'll try to make it through without crying so nobody sees, she's gonna get married, but she ain't gonna marry me..." - Thomas Rhett

It's the day Joyce Horowitz is set to marry Lonnie Byers and all of Hawkins has turned out for the event but Jim Hopper can't make himself get out of the truck and into the service to watch the love of his life marry that jackass.

Wishing Her the Best

Author's Note:

Okay so this is my first Jopper fic. Long time reader, first time writer. I love this ship so stupid much and the song 'Marry Me' by Thomas Rhett would not leave me alone when it came to the two of them so this is based off the song and its music video if you want any additional context.

It seemed like all of Hawkins showed up at the American Legion the day that Joyce Horowitz married Lonnie Byers. Nobody was particularly fond of the hotheaded nineteen-year-old working part-time out at the mill and drinking away the life insurance money that Joyce had inherited when her folks had been killed in a car crash during her senior year but everybody had a soft spot for little Joycie Horowitz who had fallen hard for the asshole when she was seventeen and full of hope. Plus, there wasn't much else happening on a Sunday night in Hawkins in mid-July.

Jim Hopper sat in his dad's old Ford pulling at his tie and nursing a flask of Kentucky's finest while he tried to find the willpower to walk into the building. His head was a mess; graduation had happened in June, his name had come up for the draft, and he was set to leave for basic training before being shipped off to Vietnam. He felt like if he could just see Joyce, just catch her eye from across the room for a second, then he'd be able to sort everything.

But he knew better. He knew if he walked in the recreation hall, caught Joyce's eye, that he'd walk right up to her and tell her to not marry that sonuvabitch. Jim Hopper had met Joyce Horowitz on the first day of the second grade when the teacher made them line up alphabetically for lunch. She had been a tiny thing, even then, but she rose to meet him that day. Her dark eyes sparking something inside his chest. He'd given up his recess that day to push her on the swings and he'd followed her around every day thereafter.

They had been joined at the hip; Horowitz and Hopper against the world. Their parents lived just four blocks apart and Jim quickly traded baseball in the street for climbing trees along Potter's crick

with Joyce. He never had patience for books but she'd plant herself in a low branch over the water and read aloud to him while he climbed, they went through dozens of books that way every summer through junior high.

Once, she had kissed him. It was all sweaty palms and twelve-year-old awkwardness while they chased garter snakes around the tall grass barefoot and dirty in the way all children were in the fifties. They had dived for the same snake at the same time, missing spectacularly, and full of laughter before Joyce quickly dipped her head and caught the corner of her mouth before jumping up and sprinting off, claiming she could hear her mama calling her in for lunch.

She came to all his baseball and football games. Normally her nose was buried deep in a book and a bomb could go off and she wouldn't hear it but she always managed to look up right when he did something fantastic and her voice was the loudest in the stands.

Jim Hopper was ass over tits in love with Joyce Horowitz by the time he was fifteen and stealing his daddy's truck to drive her out to the quarry for night swimming and blowing off Benny Hammond's beer runs to listen to her read books to him.

And then it had blown up in his face.

Junior year of high school had found him facing a difficult choice. It was stupid, trivial in the grand scheme of things, but one little thing had thrown off the entire future he'd planned for himself. He'd popped his knee out of place during the championship football game that fall and blew his chance at a scholarship to Indiana State. It had made him mean. Not violent. Just mean. And he had pushed Joyce away. By the time he pulled his head out of his ass around prom, he'd gone to ask her only to find she had fallen hard and fast for Lonnie fucking Byers, Hawkins' resident jackass.

When her parents had died in the spring of their senior year, he had reached out to her as a friend and she had curled into him. She had been a mess of anxiety and alcohol snuck from her grandfather's stash at the time and comfort of such magnitude was beyond the reach of two teenagers. He had went to kiss her one night after she

had dried her tears on her letterman only for her to push him away, Lonnie had asked for her hand and she had said yes.

He slammed his fist against the steering wheel of the truck a few times. He'd almost gotten her back, almost been able to love her the way he long had, but he'd blew his chance and Lonnie had gotten there first. And now they were getting married.

Fuck.

He glanced down at the scrapbook beside him on the bench seat that his mother had helped him piece together, photos of the two of them over the years. A wedding present. A goodbye present. Maybe forever. Not a lot of people were coming home from Vietnam. Maybe it was better that she was marrying Lonnie because at least he hadn't been drafted yet. And Lonnie probably would take her to Canada and avoid the whole mess or get himself hit by a truck and paralyzed so he wouldn't have to go.

Jim sighed deeply and glanced at the dashboard clock. The service was set to start in minutes and he needed to make a choice.

No. All I ever gave Joyce was a hard time. It's better to just... let her go.

He turned the keys in the ignition and headed in the direction of the diner where Benny Hammond was sure to be working a slow shift since the town was otherwise occupied but his father wouldn't close for the night. Benny would make some decent coffee and maybe split a basket of fries with him if he wasn't busy and wouldn't say a word when Jim's coffee became more and more Irish as the night passed.

"You asshole."

He was four coffees deep when the door to the diner slammed open and in stepped Joyce Horowitz in her wedding dress with mascara smudged across her cheeks.

"You fucking asshole."

"Why aren't you at your wedding, Joyce?" He asked as he opened the flask.

She let out the softest sob. “Why aren’t you?”

Their eyes met for the first time since she walked in. “I think you know why.”

“You need to say it,” she gritted out. “Jim... You’ve got to say it because I just walked out on Lonnie and half of Hawkins and my family-“

He slid from the booth and crossed to her quickly, his hand coming up to cup her elbow. “Cause I love you. I always have.”

“Jim-“

“I’ve been drafted, Joyce. Go back to the Legion, marry Lonnie. Have a good life.”

“Would you shut up?” She glared up at him under dark lashes. Her fingers curled in the lapel of his suit jacket as she lifted herself up onto her tiptoes. “You’re going to go and serve your deployment and you’re going to survive, ya hear? And then you’re going to come home to me, Jim Hopper. And you’re gonna marry me. Some place nicer than the Legion. My granddaddy will do the service and we’ll go fucking camping for our honeymoon for all I care. But you’re gonna survive Vietnam and you’re gonna come home and you’re gonna marry me and we’re gonna have babies and be happy because I love you too, you idiot.”

“Okay,” he agreed on an exhale. “You sure? Cause you are in a wedding dress.”

“Well shit.” She glanced down at her dress. “Think we can drive to Vegas and get back before you gotta report to Camp Atterbury?”

“Joyce.”

“I’m gonna wait for you, Jim Hopper, and you’re going to be worth it.”

He leaned in and brushed his nose over hers. “I’m gonna kiss you now, alright?”

“You better.”

The kiss wasn't one of those earth tilting things she had read to him from the books over the years but more like coming home when you hadn't even realized you'd been gone. He kissed her long and hard with one hand on her back and the other cupping her jaw until Benny dropped a stack of dishes after emerging from the kitchen to the sight.

He pulled away and smiled down at her. “I love you.”

“Yeah?” Her hands cupped the back of his head, gently pulling him towards her. “Took ya long enough.”

He pinched her sides.

“I love you too,” she promised. “You won't forget about me over there, will you?”

“Can't forget the one that's written on every page of your life story.”